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ABSTRACT

A survey of libraries in south central Pennsylvania was designed to identify those that are using or planning to use databases and assess their perceived training needs. This report describes the methodology and analyzes the responses received form the 57 libraries that completed the questionnaire. Data presented in eight tables are concerned with the number of databases currently used, current year adoption plans, probable OCLC contracts, initial database training needs, and preferred locations, topics, databases, and sponsors for training programs. Six specific recommendations conclude the report, and a copy of the questionnaire is attached. (RAA)

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Online Bibliographic Databases in South Central Pennsylvania: Current Status and Training Needs

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Introduction

Online bibliographic databases are a rapidly growing part of American librarianship. With their adoption, user groups have been initiated in several geographic regions to provide a focus for initial and continuing education. The purpose of this survey is to identify libraries in south central Pennsylvania who are using or are planning to use databases and to assess perceived training needs.

Methodology

A ten item questionnaire (Appendix 1) was prepared and mailed to the heads of 138 libraries, intermediate units and selected school districts in south central Pennsylvania. For the purposes of this study south central Pennsylvania is defined as the following counties: Adams, Centre, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Huntington, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, Snyder, Union and York. Since only summary data was collected and since time constraints were great, only fifteen days were allowed for completing the survey. No follow-ups were made. Returned questionnaires were coded and the data was analyzed by Michael Seibert, a faculty aide at Penn State/Capitol Campus.

Response

Completed questionnaires were received from 57 libraries or 41 percent of the population. While the response rate varied significantly by library type and size, almost all respondents met at least one of two criteria: (1) large libraries, generally serving sophisticated users, or (2) libraries operating in an environment (eg. health) where access to bibliographic information is routinely online. In short, one can assume the 57 respondents are self-selected and compose the community of libraries in the region that are interested in online bibliographic databases.

Findings

The first section of the survey is concerned with database use and contractual relationships. Question one asks libraries to identify database services currently in use. Of the 21 libraries currently using one or more databases, the most widely used databases are those available through Lockheed's Dialog service (Table 1).

Table 1

Number of Database Services Currently Used

BRS	2
Lockheed	16
NY Times Info Bank	1
SDC	3
Other	5
Total	26 database services

Databases are currently used in academic libraries (14 database services), special liraries (1) and the state library agency (3).

Question two identifies database services planned for adoption in the current year (Table 2).

Table 2

Current Year Adoption Plans

BRS	6
Lockheed	5
NY Times Info Bank	1
SDC	3
Other	2
Total	17 database services

Of the fourteen libraries planning to add database services in the current year, BRS and Lockheed stand to gain the most new users. Special libraries will be adding eight database services, academic libraries seven, and the state library agency one.

Combining questions one and two, 27 south central Pennsylvania libraries will be using 43 database services by the end of the current year. Only academic, special libraries and the state library agency will have database services. No public or school district libraries will be directly involved. The remainder of the findings reported in this section include responses from the 27 libraries using or planning to use database services.

The third question was designed to assess the probable impact of OCLC Affiliated Online Services on contractual relationships between database services and regional libraries (Table 3).

Table 3

Probable OCLC Contracts

BRS	3
Lockheed	3
NY Times Info Bank	0
Total	6 database services

Four libraries intend to use OCLC for six of their contracts with database services. Nineteen libraries intend to contract directly with database services and four made no response to this question.

The second part of the questionnaire deals with initial database service training needs. In other words, how many people in the area need initial training currently available on database services. Question four asks respondents to identify the number of people needing vendor training and the preferred calendar quarter for training (Table 4).

Table 4

Initial Database Service Training Needs and Dates
by Number of People

Dates	Sep-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-June	July-Sep	Total
Database Services					
BRS	10	7	-	1	18
Lockheed	3	10	2	1	17
NY Times Info Bank	-	-	-	-	0
OCLC	-	-	-	-	0
SDS	-	1	1	-	2
Other	1	-	-	-	7
					44

Only 17 of the 27 respondents answered this question, either because of the confused format or because training plans are incomplete. With the available information, it is clear that responding libraries intend to invest significant resources in initial training for 44 people this year. It is also clear that BRS training sessions in the fall and in the winter and a Lockheed training session in the winter can be held in the region thus reducing travel costs for 27 people. (Appendix 2).

Table 5

Rank Order of Preferred Locations for Initial Training

Harrisburg	1
Carlisle	2
Lancaster	3
York	3
Shippensburg	5
University Park	6

There is solid preference among all types of libraries for the Harrisburg and Carlisle areas as locations for training.

The third section of the questionnaire addresses the need for continuing database training in south central Pennsylvania. In question six, respondents were asked to rank desired topics for continuing training (Table 6).

Table 6

Rank Order of Preferred Training Topics

Instruction in the use of specific databases	1
Interview techniques	2
Library/vendor relations	3
Charges and pricing	4
Other	5

The nature of the response demonstrates a compelling demand for instruction in the use of specific databases. Fully 85 percent of the respondents indicated specific databases as their first training priority. Response to other topics was modest with only 50 percent of the libraries responding.

Question seven is designed to identify specific databases for which training is needed by area library personnel (Table 7).

Table 7

Specific Database Training Needs by Library

Chemical Abstracts	6
Predicasts	4
Psychological Abstracts	3
Biological Abstracts	2
ERIC	2
DISCLO	2
INSPEC	2

The most interesting fact of the response to this question is its breadth. Chemical Abstracts is of interest to six libraries in the region, but 16 databases were listed by only one library. A small set of high interest databases is not shared by libraries in the region.

In question eight, libraries were asked to identify an appropriate focal organization for continuing training (Table 8).

Table 8

Preferred Focal Organization for Training by Library

Associated College Libraries of Central Pennsylvania (ACLCP)	8
Pennsylvania Library Association, South Central Chapter (PLA)	8
Special Libraries Association, Central Pennsylvania Chapter(SLA)	10
A new organization	3
Other	10

Given the nature of the response categories, one could predict differences by library type and indeed these exist. Only academic libraries supported ACLCP and special libraries gave their largest support to SLA. The two organizations drawing the broadest support across library types were SLA and PLA. The concept of a new organization received little support. Under the "other" category, three respondents listed the State Library and three listed specific databases.

Question nine attempts to identify an appropriate number of training sessions each year. Fifteen of the 21 respondents to this question prefer two meetings a year. This figure is the lowest on the scale and may indicate a lack of perceived need for training or budget constraints on the part of the respondents.

In question ten respondents are asked to identify how many people would regularly attend database training. The mean of the responses to this question is 2.4 persons per library. Thus if half the libraries using or planning to use databases attend a training session, the attendance will be around 40 people.

Discussion

Libraries in south central Pennsylvania are interested in using online bibliographic databases to meet service expectations. If the response rate to this survey is a fair indicator, about 60 libraries in the region are considering adoption. Most of these libraries are either large or operate in environments where bibliographic data is routinely online. Twenty-seven libraries will have 43 database services operating by the end of the current year. If the trend continues 51 regional libraries will be using 111 database services in 1985. Of this number, 24 database services will be contracted through OCLC Affiliated Services. Even current numbers suggest a need to coordinate access to training and skills on a regional basis.

Three initial training sessions are indicated for the current year. One BRS session should be conducted during the fall and one in the winter. One Lockheed session should be conducted in the winter. If trends continue, it is likely that enough people will desire initial training to arrange between two and four sessions annually for the next several years.

Continuing training needs present a more complex picture. There is strong interest in instruction in the use of specific databases, but little consensus on which databases are of interest. Procedural and administrative concerns are topics of modest interest. There appear to be enough people to attend training sessions to attract database agents. There is little consensus on a focal organization and a relatively small number of meetings recommended annually.

Recommendations

1. The state library agency should consider gathering online information as a part of its regular data collection program.

2. A library or regional organization should organize a BRS initial training session in the Harrisburg or Carlisle area during the winter. (N.B. Hershey Medical Center has already organized a BRS for October 22.)

3. A library or regional organization should organize a Lockheed initial training session in the Harrisburg or Carlisle area during the winter.

4. Continuing training should emphasize specific databases, but not to the exclusion of an occasional session on administrative and procedural topics.

5. The appropriate groups within regional organizations should consider coordinated database training. By opening their training sessions to each others membership and by coordinating topics, they will insure attendance adequate to attract database agents. Further, the source of the reluctance to attend "yet another meeting" will be abrogated and travel costs reduced.

6. The lack of consensus on specific databases for training suggests that most libraries will possess expertise in only a relatively small number of the 150 bibliographic databases currently available. If this is the case, regional organizations should develop and adopt conventions for sharing expertise. A first step may be to compile a directory of existing skills and conditions of access. Another may be establishing third party linkages for searching.

Appendix 1

Return to:

David Hoffman
Library Development Bureau
State Library of Pennsylvania
P.O. Box 1601
Harrisburg, Pa. 17105

Online Bibliographic Database

Training Questionnaire

A. Database Status and Plans

Instructions: Check the appropriate box or boxes for each question.

1. This library is currently using: R=57
   - a. BRS [2]
   - b. Lockheed [16]
   - c. New York Times Information Bank [1]
   - d. SDC [3]
   - e. other (please list) [5]

     _____

     _____

     _____
   - f. none [36]

2. Within the next twelve months, this library plans to begin using: R-57
   - a. BRS [6]
   - b. Lockheed [5]
   - c. New York Times Information Bank [1]
   - d. SDC [3]
   - e. other (please list) [2]

     _____

     _____

     _____
   - f. none [43]

   (N.B. If your response to question one and question two is none, please complete the questionnaire by filling in the related information requested on page 4 .)

3. Which of the following database vendors do you plan to contract through OCLC Affiliated Online Services in the next twelve months? R=27

a. BRS	3
b. Lockheed	3
c. New York Times Information Bank	0
d. don't plan to contract with OCLC	23

B. Initial Training Needs

4. The cost of an initial database training session varies between $40 and $80 per person and consumes between a day and a day and a half per trainee. In the first column of boxes, please indicate how many people this library plans to send to initial training in the next year. In succeeding columns, please check the preferred training period.

R=18	No. of People	Sep-Dec '80	Jan-Mar '80	Apr-Jun '80	Jul-Sep '80
a. BRS	6				
b. Lockheed	9				
c. New York Times Information Bank	0				
d. OCLC "In the Beginning"	0				
e. SDC	2				
f. other (please list)	1				

_____

_____

_____

5. Rank the desirability of the following geographic areas for initial training with one being the most desirable and six the least desirable. R=27

a. Carlisle	1
b. Harrisburg	
c. Lancaster	
d. University Park	
e. Shippensburg	
f. York	

C. Continuing Training Needs

6. Personnel of this library have or anticipate the following continuing training needs. (rank with one being most needed and five least needed)

a. instruction in use of specific databases	[ ]	R=27
b. library/vendor relations	[ ]	
c. interview techniques	[ ]	
d. charges/pricing	[ ]	
e. other (please list)	[ ]	

_____

_____

_____

7. List those specific databases (eg. ERIC, Enviroline, etc.) in which personnel of this library need training: R=15

a._____

b._____

c._____

d._____

e._____

8. Indicate the organization or organizations you consider appropriate to serve as a focus for development of continuing training: R=27

a. Associated College Libraries of Central Pennsylvania	8
b. Pennsylvania Library Association, South Central Chapter	8
c. Special Library Association, Central Pennsylvania Chapter	10
d. a new organization	3
e. other (please list)	10

_____

_____

_____

9. Indicate an appropriate number of continuing training meetings each year: R=21

a. 2	15
b. 4	4
c. 6	2
d. 8	0
e. 12 or more	0

10. On the average, this library would have ____ people regularly participating in continuing training. R=27

11. Thank you for your cooperation. Please check the box if you desire a report of this survey. ☐ R=38

Name and title of respondent:

_____

_____

Address:

_____

_____

_____

Telephone: _____

Date completed: _____

Appendix 2

Libraries Indicating Initial Database Service Training Needs

BRS Sep-Dec 1980		Persons
P.S.U. - University Park		4
P.S.U. - Hershey Medical Center		3
P.S.U. - Capitol Campus		3
	Total	10

BRS Jan-Mar 1981		Persons
Gettysburg College		2
Hershey Foods		1
State Library		4
	Total	7

Lockheed Jan-Mar 1981		Persons
P.S.U. - University Park		2
Dickinson College		1
P.S.U. - Capitol Campus		3
Hershey Foods		1
Met. Ed.		2
U.S. Army War College		1
	Total	10